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A Year for Self-Help

WHILE Parliament and legislatures throughout the country are much in the limelight at present, the key question for everyone in the nation is what are Canada's basic prospects in 1959 in trade and commerce; to what extent will trade at home be energized, and what may be the outlook for the sale of Canadian surpluses abroad? Overemphasis on governmental problems and their solution tends to some extent to divert attention from the equally necessary and far more comprehensive results which come from private initiative without dependence upon the public purse. In British Columbia, 1959 presents a greater challenge to business and industry than any of its predecessors in the recent past.

While much of British Columbia's production is highly seasonal, the year has opened well in some respects. Reduction in charter rates at sea and increased activity in the lumber market have contributed to fairly active export sales of forest products from this seaboard. Although still depressed, base metal prices on the world market are steadier than they were, and with better outlook for the future than was apparent even six months ago. B.C. is securing its share of new housing starts in nearly all areas, with the improvement that means in the widely diversified building trade. The fishing pack of last year was high, and its disposal is proving less of a problem than had previously been estimated. It is too early yet to weigh the chances in agriculture, but steady influx of population should help there, too.

Overseas there has been a decided change in marketing conditions, affecting a number of the products which British Columbia has available for export. The effect of the European Common Market, the result of stepped-up credits under the International Bank and Monetary Fund, the settling into line of overseas currencies and, of course, the degree of success or otherwise in lessening tension on the international scene are not all new factors, but many of them have assumed different proportions this year. While these changes may bring problems to B.C. exporters trading in world markets, they may also give rise to opportunities which did not exist before.

In every change in economic weather, British Columbia usually has to depend first and chiefly on itself. That may be true of the year 1959 for a variety of reasons, some of them beyond the control of either the province or the nation. This year for most British Columbians is likely to develop into a time when initiative and self-energizing action will pay off. Given industrial peace and an active approach to the opportunities, there is no reason why 1959 should not mark another year of substantial progress in the permanent and enduring development of the province.

Fine Effort Capped

THE Legislature this week paid the B.C. Centennial Committee the highest tribute it could; it summoned the members to the bar of the House to thank them and present each with an appropriate memento. Appearance before the Legislature for this purpose is unusual, and its significance will not be lost on a committee which did such splendid work for the provincial centenary.

Looking back to 1958 with its myriad and colorful events, the consensus of opinion must be that B.C.'s hundredth birthday was celebrated in a manner well fitting the occasion. Every community concerned rose splendidly to the challenge, and under the guidance of this indefatigable committee carried out its chosen projects with commendable resource and imagination. The pageant of history unfolded for British Columbians and visitors alike was something to remain long in memory and was a great credit to the province as a whole.

One notable feature about the committee's planning was that it ended the year with some money left. This is also an unusual feature. Public bodies generally seem to need more funds than are ever allotted to them, and it is a refreshing change to have a surplus left. The surplus will be wisely spent, in university scholarships and the further restoration as an historic exhibit of the pioneer area of Barkerville. Some other recommendations are made by the committee involving government sponsorship, and all with the idea of perpetuating the record of B.C.'s first century.

The over-all cost of the centenary celebrations is in the neighborhood of $6,000,000, spent mostly in the province itself and cheap at the price in view of all the circumstances. Centenaries come only once every 100 years, and are far beyond the norm of ordinary affairs. Mr. L. J. Wallace's committee can rest content with their efforts, and the official tribute of the Legislature puts a cap on a task that did honor to the province and to the occasion.

More Generous Compensation

AMENDMENTS to the Workmen's Compensation Act introduced in the legislature by Labor Minister Wicks mark a long stride forward in this field of labor legislation in Canada. The heavily increased scales of payments to disabled employees and dependents are in themselves of great benefit to all who come within the scope of the act, but the proposed changes by no means stop there.

Broadening of the categories of injury, simplification of claims procedure, reduction of the waiting period for compensation and, most important of all, the establishment of an independent appeal board will put British Columbia far out in front of all other provinces in Canada in its treatment of those injured or killed in the course of employment. In accepting these new benefits the labor organizations of the province should in all fairness take account of the heavy additional burden which ultimately will be placed on employers.

It has taken a long time and exhaustive study to prepare this new compensation plan for action by the legislature, but the final product appears to be a good answer to all expressions of impatience. Moreover the bill could be classed as convincing repudiation of recent hot-headed accusations that the British Columbia government is anti-labor. The provisions are generous and the gains are all on labor's side.

Interpreting the News

Iran Under Pressure

By JOSEPH MACSWEEN
Canadian Press Staff Writer

THE Berlin crisis has tended to take attention away from a less sensational diplomatic battle: the East-West struggle for Iran.

Iran, which has a population considerably larger than Canada in an area about the size of Quebec and New Brunswick, lies south of Russia. It has Iraq and Turkey on the west, and Pakistan on the east.

It is linked to the West in the Baghdad pact, which includes Great Britain, Turkey, Pakistan and nominally Iraq. But Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi has been nervous about his monarchy since Iraq overthrew its pro-Western king last summer and showed signs of moving closer to Russia.

That was the starting point of a series of happenings that has seen the Iranian ruler dicker with both the United States and Russia, with the U.S. winning the inside track.

The Shah asked the U.S., which is not a full member of the Baghdad pact, to negotiate a bilateral military treaty which would have the effect of guaranteeing Iran against internal or external threats. The U.S. did not go for this, proposing instead a military-economic aid agreement.

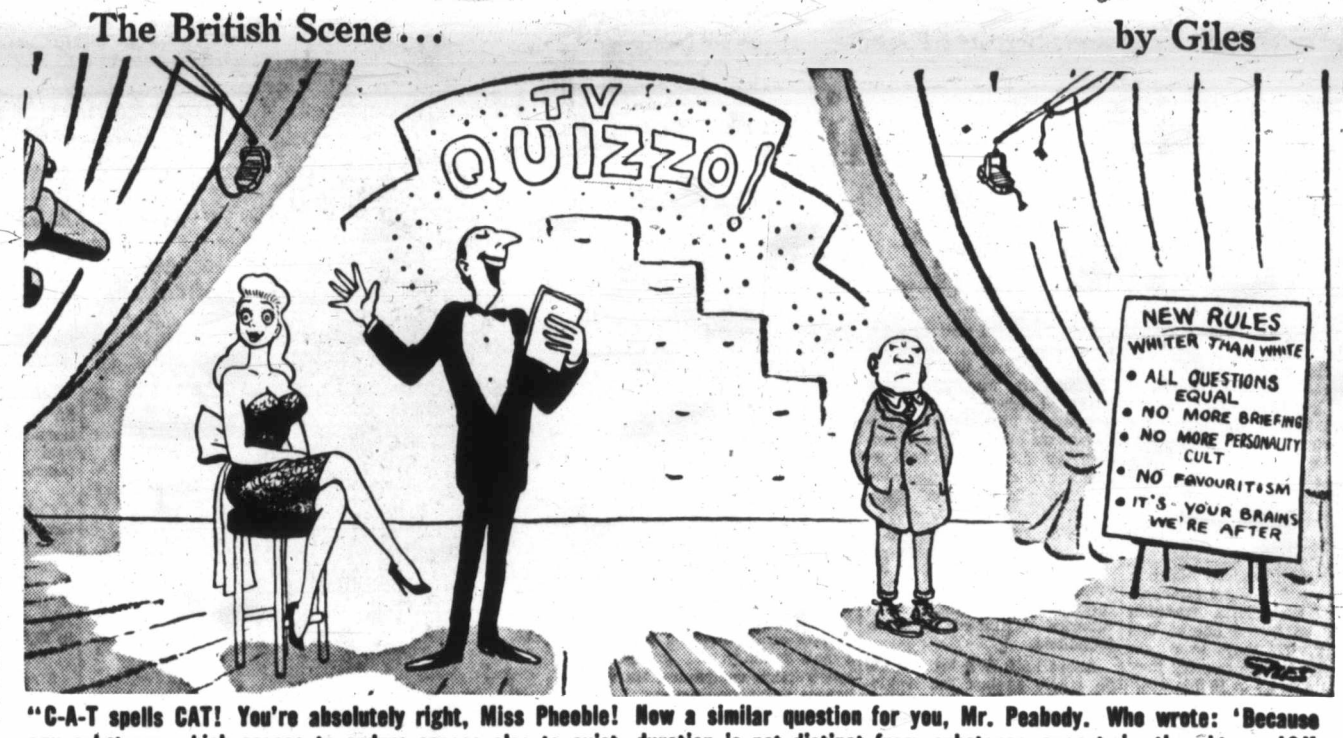
Russia was not slow to see the possibilities in the argument, and promptly sent a mission to Tehran to discuss a mutual non-aggression pact with the Shah.

Alarmed, the U.S. and other Western countries put pressure on the Shah, who finally sent the disgruntled Russians home empty-handed.

Moscow retaliated with the charge that Iran had joined the ranks of Russia's "enemies."

The Shah has indeed been daring. He not only agreed to sign a military pact with the U.S., but also notified Russia that Iran regards as invalid articles of a 38-year-old treaty giving Soviet troops the right to enter Iran under certain conditions. It was under this treaty that Russian troops entered Iran in the Second World War.

The British Scene... by Giles



"C-A-T spells CAT! You're absolutely right, Miss Phoebe! Now a similar question for you, Mr. Peabody. Who wrote: 'Because any substance which ceases to endure ceases also to exist, duration is not distinct from substance except in thought . . .'?"

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

THE Montreal Gazette takes time out to comment on the fact that Prime Minister Nehru recently admitted to error. At a press conference he questioned the soundness of some of his own judgments before India became independent. This of course is news akin to the quality of the man who bit the dog. Government members everywhere adopt the pose of infallibility and seldom if ever admit to a mistake. If they did they would seem much more human and, in addition even if they don't believe it, be respected for being candid. The biggest error of all is to pretend they can never be wrong.

* * *

The Belleville team representing Canada in the current world ice hockey championships in Europe, is favored to win the honors. Teachers are sometimes beaten by their pupils, as the British soccer world has discovered in these postwar years, but as the home of this game Canada should still have the edge over European players. It will be all the more felicitous if the Belleville team can win by sheer superior skill, remembering that hockey sticks, while often enough used at home to crack an opponent's head, are better employed abroad when concentrated on putting the puck in the net.

* * *

From Maclean's comes this note: Parents who argue that giving Junior a car of his own will hamper his school work have some new ammunition: a four-year survey in Idaho high schools. It found no A-average student drove a car to school; 15 per cent of the Bs did; so did 41 per cent of the Cs and 71 per cent of the Ds. Of students who failed or quit, 83 per cent drove cars. I wonder what the score would be in our high schools?

* * *

Snow, says the Halifax Chronicle-Herald, possesses an intrinsic beauty which makes the world lovely to gaze upon. So it does, on a picture postcard or when gazed at from a distance. Mount Baker, for instance, is a source of scenic joy to Victorians, especially when there is none of its white covering bothering them at home. A love of snow and ice will be a matter of taste but the lure of places like Switzerland or the Canadian Rockies in winter passes this writer, for one, wholly by. He much prefers pastoral country with the warm sun shining on it.

* * *

It has been estimated that 10,000,000 Britons take a weekly flutter at the football pools over there. In 1957 a total of some $200,000,000 was staked, winning payments reaching about half that figure. The pools are a profitable industry for the government, as well as a source of employment for thousands of clerical workers. The British treasury was enriched that year by about $60,000,000, and the Post Office collected over $2,500,000 from postage stamps and money order fees. Football pools are thus like the liquor and tobacco industries; they help materially to keep the ship of state afloat.

* * *

I read the other day about a Dean who wrote an article for a newspaper, which the paper had to return because no one could decipher the handwriting. After a while the Dean told the paper to forget all about the article; he couldn't make it out either! I am reminded that sometimes my own written notes are apt to be illegible to myself, and that in this respect letters-to-the-editor are great sinners. Perhaps we should all be more careful about our handwriting, especially if we want other people to read and understand it.

Letter From London

B.C. Quest for Teachers Harder

By RICHARD L. THOMAS

THE teacher hunt is on again. If you happen to be a trained teacher with a university degree it would seem that the whole English-speaking world is anxious to compete for your services—and that does not exclude the United States. Never in the history of human education have so many been dependent on so few—but even those academically qualified may be psychologically unsuitable. The result is that the shortage goes on.

This year, as in previous years, British Columbia has entered this highly competitive market and somewhat to the inevitable irritation of British education authorities is combing the higher reaches of the teacher barrel. They would like about 150 degree-studded, temperamentally adjusted, psychologically attuned wizards for high schools in British Columbia. I understand that the authorities will be very grateful if they manage to recruit only half that number; and the British authorities would be grateful if it was halved again.

* * *

Over here for the second year running, combing what one candidate described to me as the "teacher slave market," is Mr. C. B. Wood, former registrar of the University of British Columbia. Last year he managed to land 110 in B.C., after allowing for a number who got away through cold feet, failure to pass medical tests and all the other hurdles which have to be overcome by selected candidates. This year he does not expect such a big catch because of the changing conditions of the "slave market," not least because paradoxically the degree-owning slaves are better paid in Britain than their less fortunate brethren in primary and secondary schools, and there is not the same sharp differential between salary scales in Britain and British Columbia when adjustments have been made for cost of living.

There are other factors operating against B.C. too. Broadly B.C. is cold and wet in winter. So is Britain (without compensating summers or pockets of mildness like Victoria); but Australia is hot and so is Rhodesia. They too want teachers. So do other Canadian provinces. The result is that things are much more selective on both sides.

* * *

First, grammar school teachers in Britain with degrees are generally reasonably satisfied with their lot and less anxious to move. They are usually older than primary and secondary school teachers and are therefore more conscious of the welfare state, the national health service, council houses at uneconomic rents and similar blessings. They may even think that they overcome the devastation of British income tax. When they do get fed up and disappointed it is as often as not such things as the weather, the proximity of mother-in-law and the like. If it happens to be the weather—the yearning for sunshine—then Australia and Rhodesia tend to come first and there are some quite attractive jobs in the colonial service.

Secondly, British Columbia is choosey too. It is insisting on teachers with degrees and Mr. Wood is paying close attention to the capacity to be assimilated. Those looking to B.C. for their futures usually have some connection with it — maybe tenuous, like a distant cousin many times removed, or possibly the success story of a colleague. Occasionally the glorious rebel against the welfare state turns up, and the old pioneering spirit shows its head for a little while. Fortunately for B.C. there are a number of teachers who have heard good things about the province and who want to share in its building—but those who meet all requirements are increasingly difficult to find.

* * *

One of the reasons is that conditions are improving in Britain, not only in relation to salaries, but also in relation to working conditions. New schools are being built, making life pleasanter for teachers, and the constant expansion of educational facilities is making progress and promotion much easier. But there are some gravitating towards British Columbia House in London, and on present indications Mr. Wood is hopeful that he may be able to land 50 or 60 thoroughly suitable and well-equipped high school teachers in B.C. before next September. We may be sure that they will be a loss to Britain but they will be a gain to B.C. because they will be blessed not only with academic virtues but the spirit of adventure and the desire to be more constructive than they are in Britain.

Many who have applied to go to B.C. will not be called because they lack the minimum qualifications, which are high by any standard. And school boards it seems are wisely interested in quality, not quantity. Mr. Wood admits that his task is not an easy one but he is at least satisfied on one point: although numbers may be down, quality will not be and by the time he has toured the United Kingdom before closing his books in April quantity may be better than present indications suggest. In any case it is the sort of export which is well worth while on a long-term basis.

After the Arrow?

Fair Shares on Defence

(From The Brantford Expositor)

MUCH of the controversy over the Arrow fighter abandonment has shifted, and rightly, to means of finding alternative employment for laid-off Avro and Orenda workers. Here is a large pool of skills of the kind Canada must have if she is to keep any worthwhile foothold in the rapidly expanding scientific and technological fields industry has now entered.

Thinking should not be solely or even mainly in terms of military production, either. That, as we have been drastically reminded, can land us in a jolting let-down even in a period of cold war tension. The same thing would happen if and when a measure of East-West disarmament is eventually agreed. Our sights, therefore, must be set on new lines of production for peaceful purposes. Such production would not only be independent of defence orders but would benefit most from the kind of expenditures a reduction of the arms burden would permit.

The immediate problem is how to tide over this part of our aircraft and related industries and their labor forces until the big shift to other types of production can be planned and phased in. Time must be bought, and one way to buy it is to have some American—actually Canadian-American defence orders placed here, with the U.S. footing most of the bill. For every weapon so produced the U.S. would be getting the lion's share of defence insurance, so why should it not pay the lion's share of the premium?

As a member of the free world partnership, Canada has an obligation to contribute to the common defence. But neither by miscalculation, meek acceptance of the monopolistic results of U.S. industry's Washington lobbying for defence work, nor from excess of pride should Canada assume a bigger share of the burden than is properly hers. Yet we have just learned that we are to pay one-third of the cost of Bomarc bases, the new Pinetree warning line and their equipment, while only two-thirds of the cost falls on a neighbor 10 times as populous, many times richer and with far more at stake materially than we have.

A more equitable deal on the joint North American defence effort would provide work quickly for our laid-off technicians while gaining time and freeing funds to further research and expansion in areas less vulnerable to such shocks as the Arrow decision.

What's Left to Tax?

(From The Portland Oregonian)

THIS is the season for budget balancing in federal, state and local governments. It is also the time for thinking about payment of state and federal income taxes. It is therefore a period of talk of new taxes and grumbling about old ones.

Perhaps it is a good time therefore to reflect on how much worse matters could be. Here are, for example, suggestions for new revenue sources entertained by the Los Angeles city council, hard-pressed for funds: A weight tax on every citizen tilting the scales at more than 200 pounds; a head tax of $3 on each child and, to balance things up, a $1,000 per year levy on all unmarried persons. Another suggestion is that bathing suits be taxed and the wearer be required to wear a licence tag around his neck.

Let's count our blessings; the worst is apparently yet to come.

The Packsack

Of GREGORY CLARK

MY seat mate on the TCA turned out to be an executive of a supermarket chain that has big stores all across Canada. The things he told me about plans afoot to increase the charm and ease of supermarket shopping will astonish you.

"What," he asked me, "is the next logical step following upon those wire basket buggies we have for you to collect your purchases in and shove around?"

I confessed I did not know. I thought they were, as you might say, the ultimate. What with huge parking lots, and boys in white aprons to help you shove your buggy out to your car and assist you in transferring the goods into your car, my imagination could go no farther.

"Why," said my seat mate, "wheel chairs, of course! Why should our customers have to employ their energies shoving loaded parcel prams? Walking about a supermarket is like walking around several city blocks, by the time you are through. Obviously, the next move is wheel chairs. We have taken one step already by supplying space to sit infants on the buggies. Now we are designing neat, light wheel chairs with wire basket panniers attached, into which the customer, lightly wheeling herself or himself about the premises, can stack the purchases. On arriving at the market, you toot your car horn. A uniformed boy dashes out with a wheel chair and shoves you into the store. It's up to you to wheel yourself from there on. But there are engineers working on light electrical motors to drive the wheel chairs . . ."

"Now, now, now!" I protested.

Privately, I don't believe he was a supermarket executive at all. I suspect he was just another darn newspaperman, incognito.